

# German Foreign Policy

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*International Relations*

*1871 - 1914*

*Part 1*



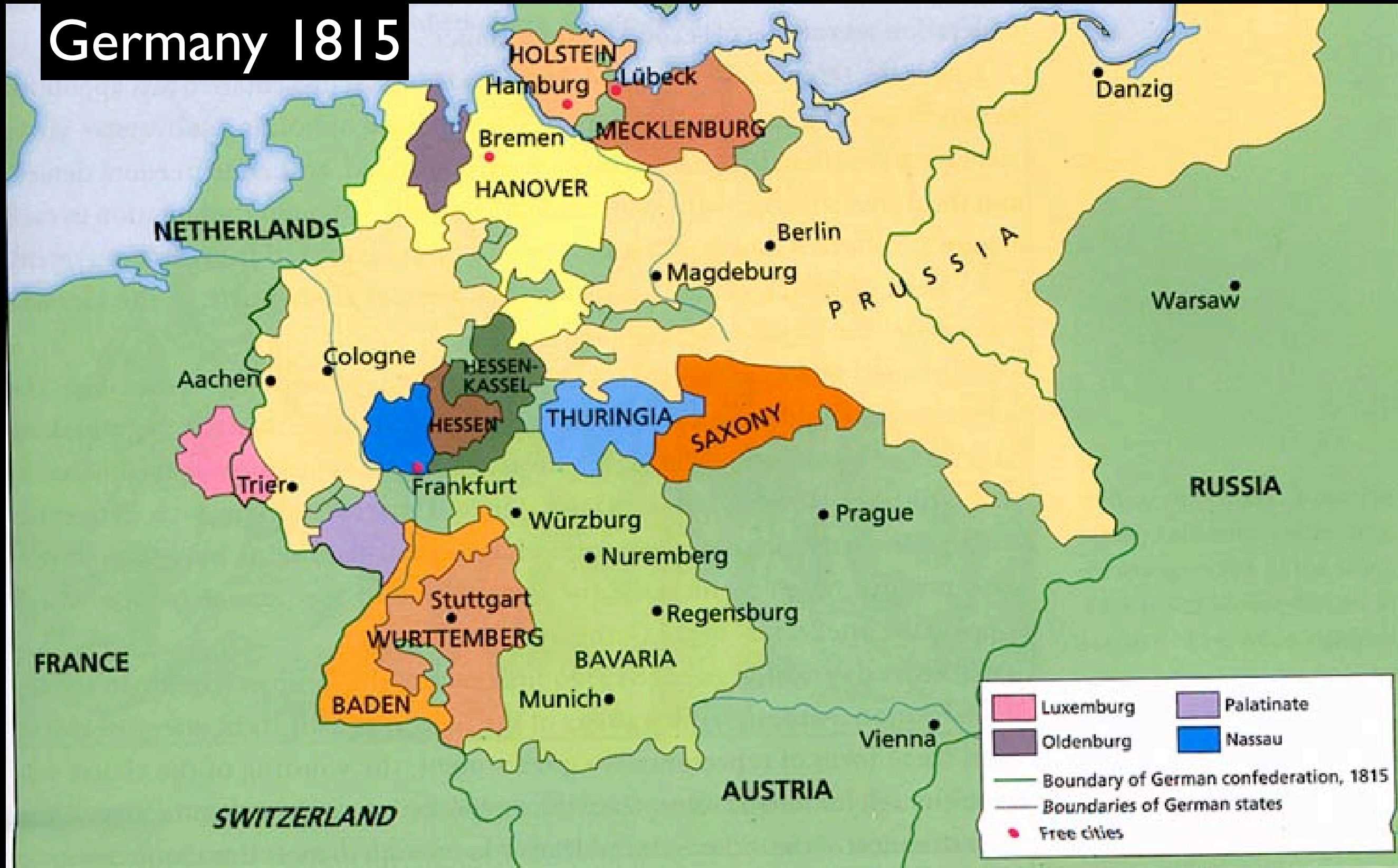
# Background - Unification of Germany

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- *The Congress of Vienna at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 redrew the map of Europe and established the Confederation of German States (39 of them) which were under the control of Austria-Hungary.*



# Germany 1815





# German Unification

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- *Prussia, the largest of these states, wanted to end Austrian domination and unite the states into a new German Empire under her own control.*



# Count Otto von Bismarck

*Chancellor of Prussia from 1862 - he was determined to achieve the unification of Germany.*





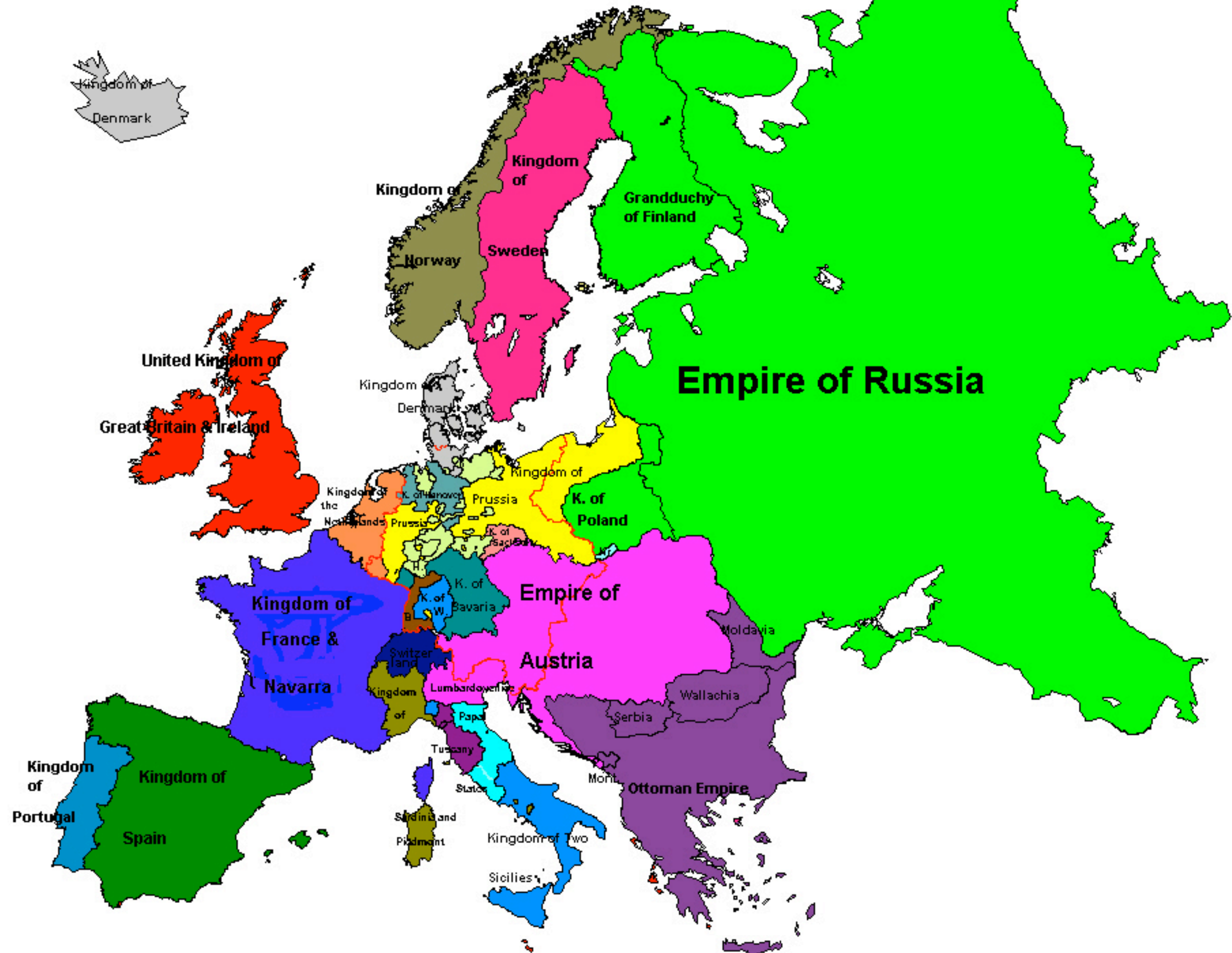
# Opposition to Unification

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- *To achieve this aim he knew he would have to deal with the neighbouring powers of France and Austria-Hungary.*
- *Austria still regarded itself as being in control of the German states and resented Prussia's growing challenge to its power.*
- *Both these countries distrusted and feared the creation of a strong German state in central Europe.*



# Europe in 1815





# Two Wars

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- *Bismarck first built a very strong Prussian army.*
- *He defeated Austria-Hungary very easily in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 (The Seven Weeks War). Bismarck was very careful to treat Austria leniently as he did not want to alienate her so as to ensure her neutrality in the forthcoming war against France.*



# Franco-Prussian War 1870

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- *The Prussian army then defeated France and this removed the last obstacle to the unification of Germany. The new German Empire was created in January 1871.*
- *France was humiliated and now felt threatened by a powerful German state on her borders.*
- *France also lost the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany and had to pay Germany 5 billion francs and suffer an army of occupation until the money was paid. The fortress towns of Strasbourg and Metz were also lost to Germany.*
- *The Prussians had further humiliated the French by staging a triumphalist march through Paris.*



# The Black Spot

- *This painting shows French children being taught about 'The Black Spot.' The teacher is pointing to Alsace and Lorraine and telling the pupils that it is a stain on France's history and that one day France will get revenge and retake these provinces.*





# Consequences of German Unification

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- *France's humiliation created a very strong desire for revenge against the hated Germany (Revanchism). This would last and was even a contributing factor to the outbreak of World War I.*
- *Change in the European Balance of Power. Previously there had been four major powers in Europe - Britain, France, Austria-Hungary and Russia which made an even balance of force possible. Now there was five powers, which made it very difficult to achieve a balance of power.*
- *Furthermore, all the countries realised that Germany was now the most powerful military force in Europe (Britain remained dominant at sea). Germany was also a very strong and growing economic and industrial power. All the countries were now in a race to keep up and the period from 1871, and particularly from 1890, to 1914 was one of intense competition between the major powers characterised by Imperialism (building overseas empires) and an Arms Race. This was to play a major part in the escalation of rivalry and tension which would lead to the outbreak of the First World War.*



# Europe in 1871





# Foreign Policy 1871-1914

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- *The period divides very clearly into two sharply contrasting parts:*
- *1871-1890, when Bismarck as German Chancellor was in control of foreign policy.*
- *1890-1914, when Kaiser Wilhelm II took personal control of foreign policy*



# Bismarck's Foreign Policy 1871-1890

- *Bismarck had waged two wars to unite Germany and has been accused of being a warmonger.*
- *But now that he had achieved his long-term aim his main priority was to keep Germany and Europe at peace.*
- *He wanted peace in Europe to give his precious new creation time to establish itself and become secure.*
- *“It is in our interest to maintain peace...we do not require to increase our immediate territory.” (Bismarck)*





# Bismarck's Aims

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- *Maintain German military superiority.*
- *Keep Europe at peace.*
- *Isolate France from other powers to stop her gaining an ally. France desperately wanted a war of revenge but was too weak on its own to tackle Germany.*
- *Keep on good terms with as many of the other powers as possible.*
- *Try to preserve good relations between Russia and Austria-Hungary (they were bitter rivals over the Balkans) because if war broke out between them Germany would be forced to choose sides, become involved in a war, and the other one might ally with France against Germany.*



# Bismarck's Methods

- Keep army strong - German army 7 times the size of the French army and 20 times the size of the British army. Germany army rose from 3 to 8 million troops between 1875 and 1906.
- International conferences and congresses in Berlin 1878 and 1884 to keep the peace between Russia and Austria-Hungary.
- Build up a system of alliances to tie countries to Germany and keep them away from France. Bismarck said “Try to be one of three, so long as the world as the world is governed by the unequal equilibrium of five powers.”
- Carry out secret diplomacy.



# Methods in Action

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- *Until 1879 Bismarck tried to achieve his aims by careful diplomacy and avoiding formal alliances.*
- *Bismarck knew that he did not have to be too concerned about Britain as it followed a policy of Splendid Isolation - it was only really concerned about its empire and felt secure behind its huge navy. As a result Bismarck did nothing to antagonise Britain - particularly by refusing to have any ambitions for an overseas empire for Germany or any plans to expand its navy. However, he never succeeded in tempting Britain out of her isolation into an alliance with Germany.*
- *Bismarck had no interest in Imperialism (building an overseas empire by acquiring colonies) for Germany as he regarded them as unnecessary luxuries which could draw Germany into conflict with other nations. He said “ Here is Russia and here is France and we are in the middle; that is my map of Africa” (See P. 108 of textbook)*
- *In 1872 Bismarck set up the Dreikaiserbund or League of Three Emperors made up of Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary. Its intention was for the three conservative traditional countries to stand up against the threat of socialism and republicanism (particularly France). Above all it kept both the other powers friendly with Germany and alienated against France.*

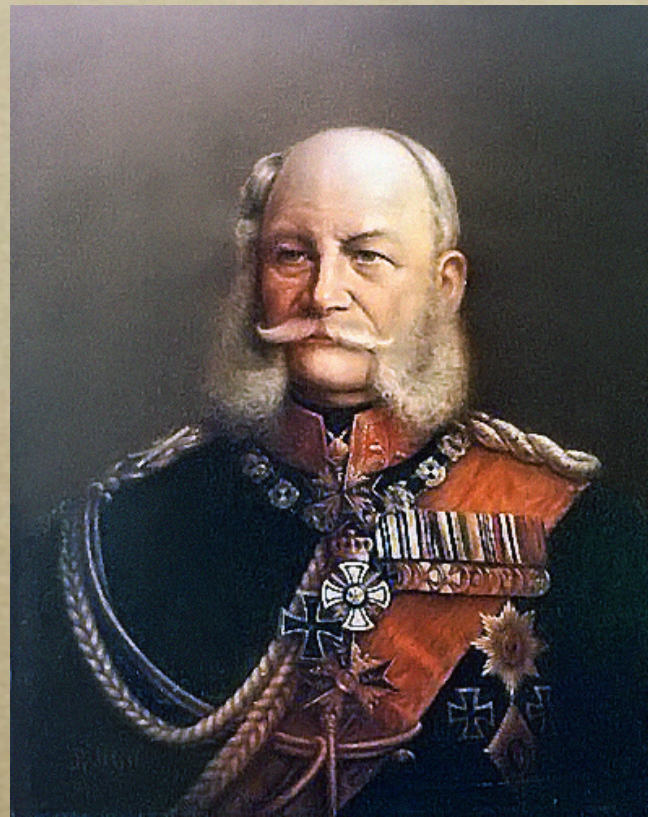


# Dreikaiserbund

Three Emperors' League



*Emperor Franz Joseph I  
Austria-Hungary*



*Kaiser Wilhelm I  
Germany*



*Tsar Alexander I  
Russia*

*Bismarck relied on this structure to isolate France, but it was never going to last because of the rivalry between the other two powers over the Balkans.*